# The Church Monthly

DECEMBER, 1933

A Plea for True Individualism

The Latchstring

Behind the Scenes

PUBLISHED BY THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH, NEW YORK

# The Church Monthly

VOLUME 8 *December, 1933* NUMBER 2

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Published monthly by the Committee on Publications of The Riverside Church.
(Issued the third week of the current month.)
Annual subscription $2.00. Two-year subscription $3.00.
Address all communications to THE CHURCH MONTHLY, 490 Riverside Drive, New York City.
Make checks payable to Harry P. Fish, Treasurer.
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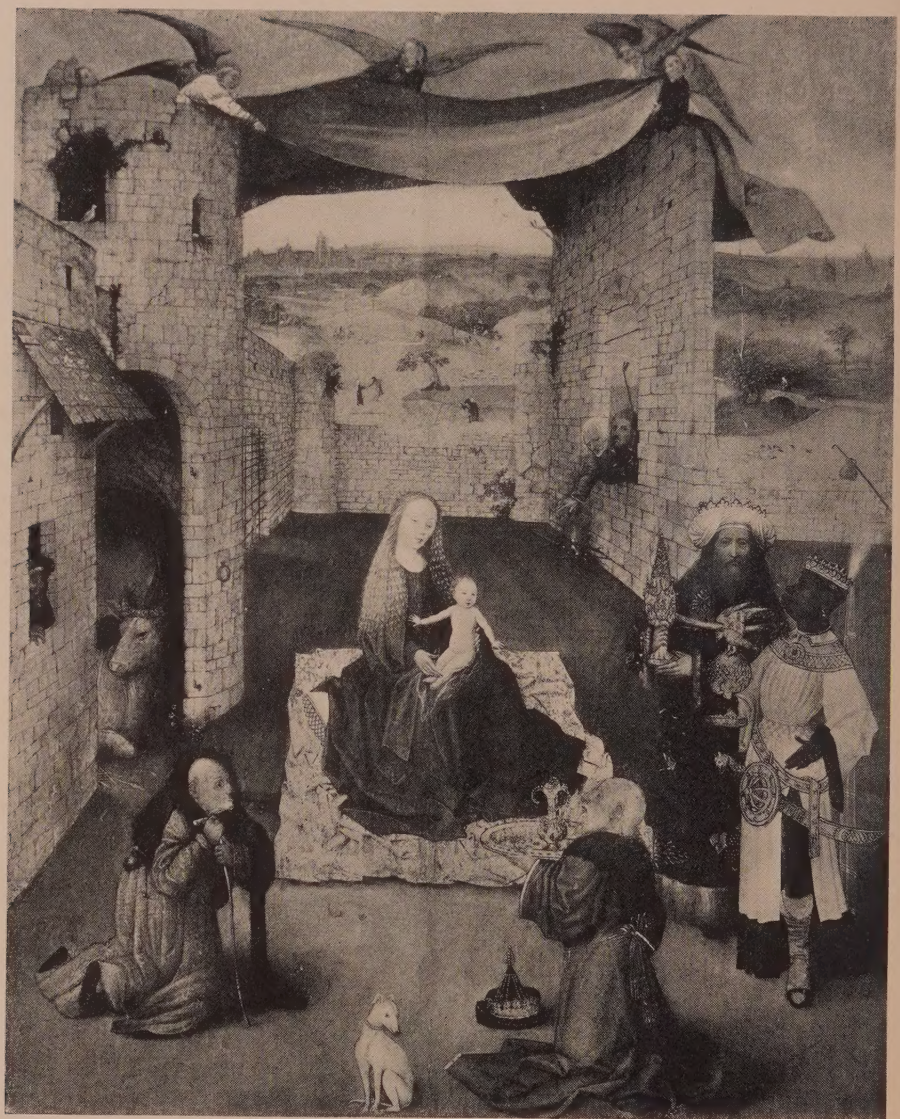


*By courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

ADORATION OF THE KINGS, By Hieronymus Bosch

# A Plea for True Individualism

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

We are living in a generation when collectivism is obviously having its innings and "individualism" is one of the most unpopular words in the vocabulary. Communism in Russia, Fascism in Germany and Italy, the National Industrial Recovery Act in the United States, are radically different in theory and method but in one thing they are identical: they all represent the extension of collective control over individual life. Like it or not, we are in a generation where large-scale planning, centralized control, and the coercion of individual life by the collective will are growing everywhere.

We may explain this master fact of our time as we please. After every breakdown of social life, with chaos supervening, there emerges a dictatorship of one sort or another, as Napoleon's did after the French Revolution. So, following the debacle of civilized society in the Great War, first chaos came and then, in one nation after another, coercive, collective control. War never has made the world safe for democracy; it always makes it ready for dictatorship.

Others will say that this new collectivism is caused primarily by the machine. It is not due to war or to any theories such as Communism and Socialism; it is machines which make it necessary for us to do things together under centralized control. Once machines helped men work; now men help machines work. One must take the measure of that fact if one would understand our era. Machines are the major factor in our new culture. They weave it together. They perform its labor. They link one mechanical process to another until an endless chain emerges with men serving machines. Inevitably, then, our modern life cannot be individualistically handled; it is essentially a collective affair.

Explain this master fact as we will, the consequence is clear: we are living in a time when individualism is breaking down and collectivism is on top of the world. Of course, our spiritual lives are affected by this towering fact. Our souls do not live in a vacuum. Far beyond what many of us here have ever thought, our inward ways of believing, thinking, feeling, living, are deeply affected by this prodigious swing of emphasis from the individual to the collective social mass.

Especially as a Christian, I find myself in these days haunted by some sayings of Jesus, fascinated by their strange disharmony with our times. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" Jesus certainly was an individualist. At any rate, while his ultimate goal was a new social order, the kingdom of God on earth, that collective hope was rooted back in indefatigable care about the endless worth and possibility of the individual. "Seek

ye first his kingdom"—so, we say, Jesus had a collective ideal. "It is not the will of your Father . . . that one of these little ones should perish"—so, we say, he was an individualist too.

Let us, at the start, get one matter off the agenda. Personally I do not question the necessity of extending the collective spirit in our economic life. We have found many realms where we do things better together than separately. The Post Office is collectively run. The public schools are collectively run. We would not go back to roads with private tolls. Our American roads, the finest highways in the world, are collectively operated. Many economic enterprises, like public utilities, will in the end probably belong in the collective category. Already, from sanitation and water works up, socially necessary undertakings have been mechanized, standardized, and taken over by society, and not one of us would vote to go back. Be sure of this: we are going a long way further on that collective road.

Just because we are, however, the need of true individualism is the more critical. For this tremendous sweep of thought and life around the world, carrying us out into an era whose coat of arms well might be collectivism rampant over individualism couchant, is not an economic matter only. Its repercussions are everywhere inside the souls of men and, this morning, in the midst of this towering collectivism I lift the standard of a true individualism, lest we forget.

For one thing, lest we forget that when our societies have become as collective as they can be made, the test of them still is what happens to individuals. Your ministers find that principle at work in this church. The building itself is large and beautiful; the organization is growing rapidly in numbers; many activities fill seven days and nights a week—would you think much of us if we were content to judge ourselves by such criteria? No. What this church is doing for individuals is the ultimate test. Nothing else matters in the end from buildings built, moneys raised, work done, organizations perfected, except what happens inside boys and girls, men and women, one by one.

Obviously, this is the emphasis of Jesus. Nothing ever was sacred to him save as it helped persons. He never let an abstraction, like religion, or society, or church, or Sabbath, get between him and his clear vision of what was happening to persons one by one. The Sabbath, for example, was one of the most sacred institutions of his people. To observe it was piety; to break its slightest law was sacrilege. But when Jesus saw the Sabbath interfering with the help of one sick man in trouble, he towered in indignation over it; he vehemently crashed through it; he put into a sweeping statement his devastating philosophy about it: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." That is a kind of individualism of endless significance.

Indeed, I am thinking of some one here with his guard lifted and his mind set against this appeal. So, he has been saying, this preacher in a Gothic church, with a privileged congregation, is pleading for individualism when all around us is the human wreckage of an individualistic economic order that has ravaged the world; I will now go up to see what this blind man says. My friend, the trouble with our economic order is that in our sense it has not been individualistic. You may use that

adjective about it—we know what you mean—"laissez-faire," but in our sense our economic system has never been individualistic. It has cared too little what happens to individuals. It has forgotten too much what befalls men and women one by one. So in a prosperous year like 1927 twelve million of our people were living at the bare level of subsistence and twenty million more were living at the minimum level of health and efficiency. To care what happens to them, to test every social institution by what it does to people one by one—that is individualism.

When some of us look into our own lives to discover what element there most directly can be traced to Jesus, it is this emphasis. Selfish like everybody else, tempted to be satisfied when things are going well with us, loving to nestle down in fortunate circumstance and let the world wag, we might contentedly do that were it not for Jesus. You say that Jesus gives you peace. Well, sometimes! But oftener, I think, in these days Jesus makes me miserable. His terrific care for people one by one, his indignation against institutions that hurt people one by one, his insistence on testing every social custom and institution by what they do to people one by one—that is no soporific, no opiate for the people as the Communists say; that is the fountainhead of the most tireless and dependable social devotion this earth will ever know.

What, for example, is supposed to be the start of Lincoln's determination to help end slavery? The slave market in New Orleans where he saw individuals being auctioned off one by one, seeing which result of a great social institution, he said, "If ever I get a chance to hit that thing I'll hit it hard." What sort of thing made Jesus so courageously unreconciled to social wrong? A beggar, sick, covered with sores licked by the dogs, lying at a rich man's gate. Nothing could compensate for that in Jesus' eyes.

Indeed, do not some of us come home to our comfortable households and amid their pleasantness feel discomfort which will not down? In New York, only a few blocks from the homes of the privileged, one finds the slums. That is where I began work in this city. When first I came here as a young man, long ago, I never dreamed of standing in a place like this. I worked on the lower Bowery in the slums. What is the matter with the slums? They are unbeautiful; they are a blemish on the city—it is not that which haunts the imagination of a man who knows them. Those slums take boys and girls, good human stuff, children as fine and promising as yours or mine ever were, and day by day they do things to them one by one. No creed we could recite would interest Jesus in the least apart from this spirit: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." In the midst of a collective age I lift that test, lest we forget.

In the second place, lest we forget that if we lose individualism we lose universalism too. I mean that the only force which can break down prejudice, racial, national or class, and introduce us into a decent and civilized brotherhood of man is the ability to get our eyes clearly on the individual and give him his chance to stand on the basis of his personal merit regardless of any collective class to which he may belong. One says of a man that he is black, or brown, a Jew, a Roman Catholic, a Japanese, a German, an employer, an

employee. I answer that first of all he is a person, of whom it is my business to think, and with whom it is my business to deal, as an individual. And, strangely enough, through that door of individualism, which seems to some narrow, runs the only road which leads to a decent and civilized brotherhood of man.

Whoever else may have difficulty in understanding that, the women ought to see it. I have before me a letter written by the grandfather of a friend of mine in 1838, nearly a century ago. The writer was the son of the then-president of Dartmouth and was himself the principal of a girls' school. Listen to him as he writes to his father: "One of my young ladies will be fitted for College next fall and, were she to enter, girl though she be, would take the first rank in her class. I don't know however that any of our New England Institutions are so liberal and unprejudiced in the notions of equality, that they would be willing to admit her, and I fear that I shall be obliged either to send a candidate to Oberlin, or keep her myself."

Things have changed for you women in a hundred years, and the major cause which has wrought the amazing alteration is the fact that when we think of our daughters we do not say first, They are *women,* but first, They are *persons,* to be dealt with, not collectively as members of a class, but individually as personalities.

All history bears witness that this is the only door toward universalism in any realm. We have been speaking, for example, of the individualistic attitude of Jesus, his care for persons one by one. It sounds innocent, harmless, to some of you, perhaps sentimental. Yet consider its amazing social consequence. For if men and women were to be individually treated, each personality standing on the basis of his own merits, then the Christian fellowship as a whole could have no race lines, no sex lines, no national lines, no class lines. The story starts innocently enough: It is not the will of your Father that one should perish. But see how it ends: Neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, Scythian, barbarian, bond nor free, but one man in Christ.

If I read the newspapers aright, few things need much more to be said than does this privately or publicly. You and I need it. To treat people always as persons, never as members of a class, and so never to have a collective prejudice—we need it. As for the world at large, see what collectivism does when it goes mad. It becomes ruthless to individuals, in one nation now absolutely ruthless to a whole race of individuals, sacrificing personality, with its right to think and live, upon the altar of a totalitarian state.

Some of you are tempted to think of such collectivism as progressive and new. Collectivism new? Upon the contrary, it is one of the oldest things in the world. That is where human society first began. Primitive tribal life was absolutely collective, mass control by custom and taboo, no individual rights, no individual conscience, no individual religion—mass mind, mass conduct, mass control. That is where human society started. And the crowning glory of the ages has been the emergence of the individual, his intellect, his conscience, his power and freedom to create. I beg of you Americans: Never sacrifice your soul to that ancient fetish and lose the glory of the race!

Recall that I already have said that in the management of external things col-

lectivism is often advantageous. Indeed, it may be that at the long last we shall come through to what technological prophets dream: that the entire provision of man's economic needs will be mechanized, standardized, reduced to a few hours' labor a day, taken over by society like the water works, and that the individual will be freed as never before in history by the collectivizing of external things. I suppose we never can tell how far that process may go without endless experiment.

That, however, is the point. You and I are going out into a generation which will try endless collectivist experiments and, like everything else, collectivism can go mad. When it does go mad it crushes the noblest thing in human life, personality. Yes, when it goes mad enough it builds a totalitarian state and on it, as on a Procrustean bed, it stretches out all that is too short and saws off all that is too long. It builds a high altar to uniformity and slays upon it the freedom of the soul. Then, moved by mob hysteria, a whole generation is led to think that this is something new and progressive when all the time it is a desperate endeavor to get back to the far-off place where human society first started, and from which for five thousand years the individual has been trying to fight free. I wanted a chance to say that this morning—lest we forget.

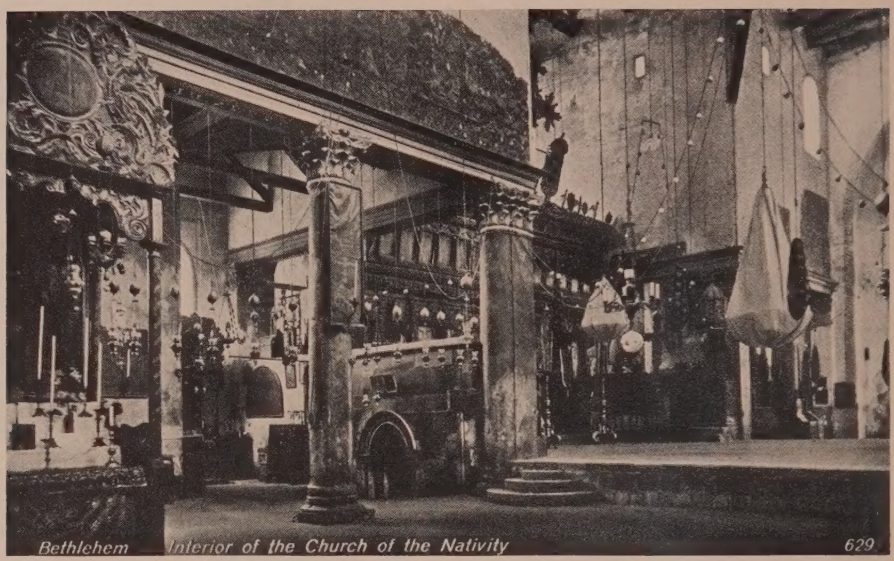
The concluding matter is intimately personal. The outside of the collective process is physical standardization, which is often beneficial; the inside of the collective process is psychological standardization, which is one of the most ignoble things to which mankind can ever sink, so that in a generation like this, swept by collectivism, there are few things more important than that men should make covenant with themselves, that they will at least be individuals and have souls of their own. A friend of mine suggests that perhaps a man from Mars might come to earth and face us with this question: What has mankind done up to date anyway? What has the human race to show to justify its long, long history? What would you think of first in answer to that question? I know what I would think of first: individuals, select groups of individuals, the best fruit of the race, the finest thing mankind has yet to show, the pledge and promise of what humanity may be. O Man of Mars, I would say, our human history has been tragic enough, filled with failures multitudinous, but it has not been altogether barren. Scientists have grown here, great personalities whose intellects have unrolled the universe before our wondering eyes. Seers and singers, poets, artists, builders have grown here, their spirits crying before the gates of beauty,

> Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
> And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors:
> And the King of glory will come in.

And characters have grown here, beautiful as though an artist made them, some of them saints and sages who have unveiled to us the world invisible, some martyrs and pioneers,

> Lonely antagonists of Destiny,
> That went down scornful before many spears.

Such individuals have been the glory of the race and when in humbler fashion men and women like ourselves have souls of their own, independent minds, unconsenting consciences, inner lives hid with Christ in God, rich and real, that glory shines again and helps to justify the travail of the centuries.




CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM

Sometimes when the mood is on me, this noisy world of politics and blustering circumstance fades out and nothing is left except individuals. Around the globe they stretch, woven by personal ties each to each in a vast network. From soul to soul, like nerves the channels run, multitudinous and intimate. And when in this vast interlacing nervous system of humanity a real personality arises, lo! at the last, throughout the length and breadth of the world's life his impulse runs. He is an individual. He gives himself to individuals. They give themselves to others still, and they to others still, and so he goes on working forever.

If ever there was a generation when this kind of thing needed to be said, it is now. Make use of collective processes by all means, but do not sell to them your soul. If by individualism we mean selfishness, this is no time for that but for public spirit and cooperation. Nevertheless, the test of everything worth while in our collective life is what happens to individuals. The road to everything worth while in our collective life is through individuals. The fountainhead of everything deep and vital in our collective life is in individuals. Take a long look at the Master and see, lest we forget!

## PRAYER

Eternal Spirit, we are constantly anxious lest we be enslaved by the past. Save us from that far greater danger, slavery to the present! Amen.

*Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon October 22, 1933.*

# Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal God, high over all yet in all, if we seek Thee it is because Thou first hast sought us. We cannot live without Thee. We cannot confine ourselves within ourselves and not think of Thee. We cannot live by bread alone. In our hearts are thoughts that wander through eternity, aspirations and ideals that tempt us to be needlessly good, faiths and hopes which reach out from the visible into the invisible.

O God, most High, Thou hast sought us and today we would seek Thee. Give us elevation of thought and life. We live too much among the lowlands. We inhabit the marshes. We walk the dusty road. We feel the downdrag of our society, and the gravitation of this present world pulls hard upon us. We would be lifted to a new altitude and in a cleaner moral air see wide horizons.

Lift us above our anxiety. Thou Who inhabitest eternity, canst Thou understand how great small things often seem to us, how closely we hold them to our eyes, until we can see naught beside? We need elevation; we need to be lifted above the things that worry us. Baptize our eyes; anoint our vision. Save us from our nearsightedness. Give us farsight today that great things may seem great and small things small.

Lift us above our temptations. So often we fight a losing battle against evil because we fight upon low levels. Carry us, we pray Thee, to the mountains, where the diseases of the marshes cannot infect us. Give us a fairer chance to win our fight for high character and worth while service because we have been lifted to the altitude where the soul fights well.

Elevate us above our bitterness. O God, if we have been wronged, if life has been hard upon us, if we have brought grudges to Thy sanctuary, soreness of heart and resentment against the world, elevate us above rebellion into goodwill, serenity and peace, that we may come off more than conquerors.

Lift us above our fears. Give us faith and courage. We would surmount our cowardice and timidity. Thou hast set us in a world where cowards cannot win. No easy journey hast Thou given us to travel, Thou dispenser of the destinies of men. We do not understand these mysteries but we know that often they involve hardship and that only the brave soul triumphs. We would not lose the fight. Therefore lift us above fear.

As thus we pray for ourselves, we remember also the dear and holy interests of our social life, our families, our schools, our friends, our nation. Especially we pray for the nation. Throned here upon this continent between the seas, Thou knowest what sacrifice has gone into her making. That she may not fail now we pray. Elevate her above her cheapness and vulgarity, above her looseness and licentiousness, above the spirit of selfishness in high places, above those who feed upon her and do not sustain her nobler life. Lift up this nation to an altitude worthy of the high ideals that were hers in the beginning and the unselfish lives which have been built into her soul.

*(Continued on page 37)*

# The Latchstring

*Seen and Heard.* Dr. Sherwood Eddy, Professor Hans Kohn, Dr. James T. Shotwell, Dr. E. Stanley Jones, the Hon. Samuel Seabury; these are all names to conjure with in the mind of the general public and they represent highly effective personalities in their respective spheres of activity and leadership. All of them have appeared at The Riverside Church in the past few weeks and have left behind them an enduring sense of the vitality of their lives, the pointedness and effectiveness of their respective appeals.

Dr. Eddy gave a characteristic and vivid portrayal of world conditions as he has observed them in the course of his recent travels in Europe and the Near East. Just to be reminded of him is to be thankful that his clear and courageous voice is being raised in the assemblies of the people under varying auspices across the country. We stay-at-homes are grateful indeed that such men as Dr. Eddy are abroad in the world.

Professor Hans Kohn took us on an amazing philosophical and historical travelogue. We did not go from one country to the other with him but rather we lived with him through the great ages of mankind's experience. We passed with him from feudalism to nationalism and so at last stood on the far shore of the age of nationalism and looked over into the promised land of internationalism and the reign of the family of mankind.

Professor Shotwell left us with the realization that in our immediate community a man of culture, scholarship, and imagination is, with straightforward fearlessness, facing and evaluating the trends of our time.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones spoke in the nave recently to a large company of the ministers and denominational leaders of the Metropolitan area and interpreted to them in his charming, altogether Christian manner the situation which the missionary activities of the churches are facing abroad. Dr. Jones is at once a challenge and a benediction. Christian missions are fortunate in having such a man at the forefront of their appeal.

The Hon. Samuel Seabury appeared here on a Wednesday night prior to the municipal elections. It was the eve of a great triumph for the forces that are fighting for a change in the city government and the possibility of a better day in municipal affairs. This stalwart leader of the Fusion party was the overshadowing personality in the pre-election campaign and now stands in the opinion of a very great company as in fact "our first citizen."

It is not possible for us to recount the names and identify the individuals in their respective spheres of influence and activity who appear weekly and almost daily in the programs and activities of the church. In addition to those who come here for some specific engagement, we are continually finding that interesting people from all parts of the world come into our building to spend a few moments of quiet and meditation in the nave or in one of the chapels. We have surprising and happy experiences in our casual contacts with many of them. On one occasion we found an interested English woman who

desired to see the carillon. It was before the stairs had been put in place and the only access to the bell chamber was to climb a series of ladders. No woman had previously been up there but the intense interest of this stranger led us to permit her to go if she so desired. This she did with alacrity and in thanking us for the privilege afterwards disclosed that she was Lady Austen Chamberlain of England.

▽

*Churches Within the Church.* Breaking up the church membership into organizations and committees is one way of disclosing the many circles of fellowship and interest which are operating within the larger group. Still another and more interesting picture of what is going on within the fellowship would be disclosed if we were able to see the swift passage back and forth across these organizations' borders of individuals who find themselves instinctively drawn to other individuals and other interests and activities than those which are definitely a part of the specific organizations of which they are members. Weaving in and out of all of these groups there are to be found the responsible members of the church and congregation who are carrying, just so far as it is possible for them to do so, their proportionate share of support and obligation. They are a church within the church, in very truth. We have no disposition to single them out or unduly emphasize their importance but we cannot help but realize how much more they are getting, as well as contributing. Strong, sturdy, independent, asking nothing for themselves, happy to be able to carry a share of the common burden, they mean vigor, courage, health to our corporate life. We appeal to you who are strong not only to join The Riverside Church but to join the church within the church.

▽

*Did you receive the last budget letter?* A letter went out over Dr. Fosdick's signature last month directed to the entire membership of the church and congregation. Do you recall having seen it in your mail? Dr. Fosdick's message was on the front page of that four-page communication. The other three pages gave a very complete and altogether understandable presentation of the budget situation in The Riverside Church. Perhaps you do not remember all the details but do you recall specifically that we still have $18,000 of old pledges that have not been renewed this year and that we need $12,000 in new pledges, in addition, to cover an impending deficit of $30,104 for the current year which ends the first of May?

You perhaps were impressed by the fact that the benevolence budget is just a little bit further behind than the current expense budget. By a recent slip of the tongue we referred to the church support item as the "current suspense budget," and as a matter of fact that is not a bad definition of the actual attitude of mind as we face that rather significant sum. The benevolence budget, as we observed above, is even further off the line and shows a potential deficit, unless pledges that were made last year in the sum of $24,835 are renewed and $10,620 of new pledges are secured.

Well, we started out simply to ask you whether or not you had received the budget letter, had read it, and digested it. Assuming that you have done all of these things, we inquire

further, have you responded? Help us to take out the possibility of another slip of the tongue whereby we will be talking seriously in terms of suspense instead of expense.

▽

*"Pop Goes the Weasel."* A young lad was home from school one day recently and along about 12:00 o'clock he heard the carillon ringing. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Mother, they're playing 'Pop Goes the Weasel' on the bells." Sure enough, that was one of the tunes which Mr. Lefévere had selected for his special program in recognition of The Children's Crusade. A request had come from the directors of the organization asking that the church bells of the city be rung at 12:00 o'clock on November 28th, as part of the emphasis being placed on the support of the welfare organizations dealing particularly with the children. The program with which Mr. Lefévere responded to the invitation, besides "Pop Goes the Weasel," included: For All the Saints, a group of Children's Songs and Nursery Rhymes: Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat; Polly Put the Kettle On; Ding, Dong Bell; I Had a Little Nut-Tree; Little Jack Horner; Three Blind Mice; Old King Cole; Fairest Lord Jesus, and Thanksgiving Prayer.

▽

*Overheard.* Two strangers who had gone to the observation platform at the top of the tower had evidently been piqued a bit by the fact that they had to pay twenty-five cents for this privilege. As they got into the elevator on the twentieth floor to start down, one of them was heard to remark to the elevator operator, "Does it cost to go down, too?" This bit of sarcasm prompts us to philosophize a bit about the matter of fees for visitors who go to the observation platform during the hours of the afternoon when this opportunity is provided. Obviously it does cost something to take people up into the tower. Not only is the running of the elevators included in the expense but the public cannot be admitted to that area without having at least one man up there, in fact two men, to answer questions and to act as custodians of the property that necessarily is exposed.

One of three things has to be done. We could say to the general public that they are not permitted to go into the tower and thereby much of our expense would be eliminated. We could permit visitors in the tower as we do now and pay the cost out of funds of the church. This we conceive to be an illegitimate use of money which is given to us for the operations of the church on the basis of service to the community. Conceivably it is a bit of a service to the general public to go into the tower but it is hardly the type of service which we could rationalize as a legitimate item in either our current expense budget or our benevolence budget. If the visitor referred to above would repeat his question, "Does it cost to go down?" we would be inclined to reply in the affirmative. Yes, it does cost to go down and that is why it is necessary for us to charge a slight fee to the visitors who want to go both up and down.

# Behind the Scenes

By Grace H. Patton

My friend from California, a keen, experienced business man, attending Riverside Church for the first time, was deeply interested in the mechanics of the service. "How in the world do they do it?" he asked me when the service was ended.

"I'm sure I don't know," I answered. I was still under the spell of the service itself. Besides, I was a newcomer in the church. "There must be a lot done behind the scenes."

"I should think so," said my friend. But he returned to his home in California unenlightened as to the inner workings of the great church whose service had so impressed him.

Since then I have done considerable scouting around in out-of-the-way corners of the church, have asked many questions of the powers-that-be, and have made myself somewhat familiar with the "way the wheels go round." Thinking that perhaps some of you may have wondered, even as my friend wondered, what is done to make everything proceed so smoothly during a morning service, I am giving a peep behind the scenes to any of you who may be mechanically minded, motor minded, or just plain inquisitive.

We find, to begin with, that nothing in the manipulation of the machinery of this modern church is left to chance. It is surprising to find how much preparation precedes the Sunday service. It starts on Friday when the three organs —the one in the chancel, the echo organ in the gallery, and the organ in the chapel—are carefully tuned. From then until Sunday the rooms where these organs are housed must be kept at a perfectly even temperature to suit their very sensitive and delicately organized constitutions.

On Saturday night final preparation for the Sunday activities takes on a genuine house-cleaning aspect. Because this church does not believe that building should be put before program in importance, it allows the rooms of the church to be used until late Saturday night by the groups that need it. When the last group has departed (usually a party of young people who have been having their Saturday night frolic) the work of cleaning the church and getting it in order begins. This continues all night, and the morning finds the whole building spick-and-span. Then, early on the Sabbath, along comes a member of the House Committee who sees that everything is in readiness. All mechanical devices must be working, elevators running, class rooms for the Church School set in order and those people on hand who are necessary to the proper managing of the building. All places in the church, even obscure closets and remote corners, must be presentable so that inspection at any time would produce no embarrassment.

Long before it is time for either church or school to begin, the business manager is on the scene, for on his shoulders rests the responsibility of the whole building for the rest of the day. He is here, there, and everywhere, test-checking in every section of the vast structure. He may be found in a class room seeing that blackboards are in place, or down in the lower regions

of the church where machines, boilers, gadgets and electrical devices have their habitat. He may be directing traffic during the rush hour on the elevators—a huge task in itself, seeing that the crowds are conveyed so that toes will not be tramped, tempers ruffled, or bewildered visitors put off at the wrong floor—or ascertaining the temperature of different sections of the building.

This matter of temperature and ventilation is a fascinating tale in itself. At one time, just when Riverside Church was building, the business manager had occasion to go aboard a United Fruit Company's steamer. There he discovered that, because bananas must be kept in an unchanging temperature, the engineer's room contained an appliance for ascertaining the temperature of any part of the ship. "Just the thing for Riverside Church," thought the business manager as he at once appropriated the idea; and now the narthex office, easy of access, contains a remote control thermometer which shows at a glance the temperature of the nave, the chapel, the assembly hall, or any room where people are congregated during the service.

Now, as to the ventilation. Did you ever attend a church service where, if a window was opened, it did not soon happen that some gentleman, given to baldness or some lady addicted to stiff neck, did not frantically try to get the attention of an usher so that he might close the offending window? You will not find that happening in Riverside Church, for there are no open windows. Yet the church is perfectly ventilated, for it is air-conditioned. Air is drawn in from above the street level, taken to the engine room where it is subjected to a special process of cleaning, is heated to a comfortable temperature, forced into openings beneath the pews in the nave, then drawn off through huge exhaust fans high up in the roof. And all this complicated ventilating system, as well as the heating apparatus, must be found to be in perfect order before the Sunday service begins.

Still the business staff has not finished its task until the mechanics of sound—microphones, amplifiers, and loud-speakers—have been meticulously examined. All these instruments must be perfectly synchronized and it is a matter of very great importance, for the uncontrolled antics of an unruly loud-speaker can almost completely wreck the most carefully planned church service. Riverside Church is fortunate in having excellent acoustic properties, but so large a building has to have help in conveying sound to each individual listener. Loud-speakers are used not only in various sections of the nave, and in the chapel and assembly hall where overflow groups are gathered, but a loud-speaker conveys to the end of the long line of the choir the music which the beginning of the line is already singing in the chancel. In this way they are also given the lead of the organ, making perfect unison of sound possible. There is also a loud-speaker in the narthex office from which certain parts of the service are directed. The carillon, when used at any point during the service, must be carefully amplified from its chamber high up in the tower. All of these electrical appliances must be watched both preceding and during the church service. Yet these many devices are so skillfully concealed that they are not at all in evidence to the people in the audience. For this reason many naïve and amusing guesses are often made as to their

location. Said one lady to another who had asked her what "that thing over Dr. Fosdick's head" was, "Why, that is a replica of an old cathedral in France. And up inside it there's a miniature set of bells!"

But even the most uninitiated recognize the ear-phones, and those who have to use them are pleased not only to find them in order but in a less conspicuous location than "deaf man's row" in the front seat. They are scattered about every fourth seat throughout the audience, and they convey to the hard-of-hearing not only the spoken word of the service but also the music.

Having followed, to a certain extent, the line of inspection which is a necessary preliminary to the activities of the day, we now find it is almost time for the morning service to begin. Stationing ourselves at the narthex office we observe the deacons and trustees of the church reporting on duty as punctiliously as working men punching the time-clock. The ushers also have made their presence known and each one of them—of whom there are usually fifty or sixty present each Sunday out of a Board of Ushers totalling eighty-five—knows his exact place and the way in which he is to function. Indeed, were there space to permit it, one could a tale unfold of their drill and deeds and discipline, which is almost as thrilling as that of a Coast Guard crew! Suffice it to say that they are indispensable.

This busy narthex office keeps a watchful eye on all that transpires in the halls where people are coming and going. When eleven o'clock arrives, that office sends the signal to close the rear doors of the church, for the service has really begun and entrance there is no longer possible since the choir must use the hall of that entrance. When the corps of men, Trustees, Deacons, and ushers who gather the offering, congregate in the narthex preparatory to carrying their burden to the altar, it is the narthex office which gives them the signal to proceed. This signal has come from the chancel. There a little girl, sitting beside the organist and turning his music for him, knows that at a marked place in the offertory music she is to make a signal to the minister at the lectern who is watching her. The minister then pushes a button close beside him which signals the narthex office to start the lengthy line of deacons and trustees on their long, dignified march toward the chancel. Having deposited their plates, they disappear like magic and appear again on the side aisles, quite unobserved, while the congregation stands during the singing of the next hymn. From there, they quietly take their seats in the audience, and it is found that one of them, a physician, sits in a special pew that can be signalled by a blue light, ready at any time for an emergency.

During the entire service, which is now in progress, the business manager and his administrative force at work behind the scenes must be constantly "on the job." Especially must the element of sound be controlled. Any peculiar little noise detected during the service must be traced to its lair or it may upset the whole procedure. More than once a slight, though disturbing sound has been traceable to some remote cause like a window open high up in the tower! The price of a smoothly conducted service is eternal vigilance.

One of the most interesting spots in the whole church during a service is the control room, a tiny chamber situated at the right of the chancel, similar in

most respects to the control room in a broadcasting station. The place is fairly bristling with mechanical and electrical devices. The sound-electrician and his assistant are busy every minute giving signals, controlling speakers, regulating lights, communicating with the carillon chamber when necessary, listening to messages from the men in attendance on loud-speakers in chapel and assembly hall, and at the same time watching with utmost care the progress of the service. Standing at his tiny window overlooking the chancel, the electrician places the church calendar before him and follows it in every detail. It is from this secluded sanctum that there takes place the dimming or heightening of the illumination at different points in the service. The effect of this is one of the most beautiful parts of the service, the cluster of lights reminding one of a spray of shining blossoms burgeoning into bloom. This and many other electrical effects must be controlled from this concealed chamber where, looking out on the scene being enacted so close at hand, one is reminded once more of the truth that "all the world's a stage," even a church chancel during a service.

When the service closes there must again be the sending of signals, the functioning of ushers, the control of traffic and elevators, and all the skillful engineering that makes possible the dignified exodus of a milling mass of people. But that, too, is another story. We have seen and heard enough to realize what a responsible and complicated task is theirs who must see that the service in a large, modern city church like Riverside is accomplished without fault or falter.

Our church forefathers would no doubt stand agape, and possibly aghast, at this introduction of mechanical and electrical devices as aids to worship. The early Christians could never, even in their most prophetic moments, have foreseen anything like this. They held their services in private homes and upper chambers. Then, for a while, they were driven to carcers and catacombs for their places of worship. Throughout the ages since then Christians have worshipped in mud huts and cloistered cathedrals, in open grove and amid Gothic grandeurs. Our forefathers shivered in tiny unheated brick chapels and labored behind the scenes to pump vitality into wheezy little organs in crude country meeting houses. They would find almost incredible the facilities that Riverside has at its disposal. They might even vote for the old-time simplicity, just as many of their prototypes today vote for the "old time religion."

But surely that sort of simplicity in church worship has its disadvantages. I well remember attending a church service in a remote village in India. The place of meeting was a diminutive mud-and-thatch school house with one side open to the highly distracting drama of Indian village life. People passed and children stared. An adjacent buffalo champed his chain, and goats and chickens found their leisurely way into the place of worship. The congregation sat on the floor. The wine passed at the communion service was the water in which a few raisins had been soaked. It was all simplicity personified. But the distractions and interruptions, the sights and sounds proceeding from the encroaching village made it well-nigh impossible for the preacher to get his message across and for the worshippers to give their minds to the matter of worship.

That, of course, is the other extreme; but one is forcibly reminded of it when one sits serene in the utter finesse of a service like that of which we have been talking. For one realizes that it is this same finesse and facility of function that makes it possible to "submit the senses to the soul" and to worship the Lord without marginal distractions and disturbances.

Shall we not, then, in spite of possible maledictions against much that a mechanical age inflicts upon us, be thankful for all the gadgets and appliances, contraptions and contrivances, both electrical and mechanical, that help make such a service possible? And shall we not give our benedictions to those persons — engineers, operators, staff heads and assistants—who Sunday after Sunday help provide a serene and beautiful place of worship for the thousands who attend the services in this stately edifice? Surely "they also serve" who serve behind the scenes.

## PRAYER

(*Continued from page 29*)

Lift up the whole world, we pray Thee. We are too small to pray for the world. Our sympathies are too shut in to care about all races and creeds, all colors and nations. Yet in elevated hours we know that we ought to lose our parochial minds and achieve an all-inclusive love. So lift us up this hour, within Thy sanctuary, that we may be able in sincerity to pray for the peace and prosperity of all the world. And then send us out to labor for it in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

## WILL YOU HELP THE CHURCH MEET THE CHRISTMAS APPEALS?

**A Committee of the Woman's Society,** with Mrs. Martin G. Wilkinson as chairman, is in charge of the Christmas gifts for the Judson Neighborhood House in Washington Square. Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. E. L. Ballard, Mrs. Charles F. Burke, and Mrs. E. C. Carder, have been designated to receive contributions of money from interested friends.

**A Church Christmas Fund** for the extension of the helpfulness of the church to families with whom we are in touch will welcome any gifts that members of the congregation may wish to make. Send your check or make your gift definitely for the Church Christmas Fund. Send it to one of the ministers or to the church office.

**Christmas boxes** for shut-in children are being provided by a committee of which Mrs. Marshall Clarke is chairman. Each box costs $2.00 to prepare. Contributions to the fund will be welcome to the committee. Indicate that your gift is for the shut-in children.

**Christmas Party for Boys,** sponsored by the Men's Class at the church on December 19th. Seventy-five cents will pay for the dinner and program for a needy boy whom the Class will invite. Men of the church and congregation are invited to be present also as friends of the boys at the price of 75c each. Tickets are on sale at the Narthex Office and the Cloister desk at the close of the morning service.

**If you have an interest** in one of the major Christmas funds being raised in the city, such as the Hundred Neediest Cases, The Family Welfare Committee, The Crusade for Children, The United Hospital Fund, or others, the church will appreciate your making your check out to the object you have in mind and sending it to the church where you will be credited with the gift. It will be sent directly to the Fund you indicate. Permit us to be your almoner at this Christmas season.

—*From the Church Calendar of December 17, 1933.*

THE GYMNASIUM BECOMES A LIVING ROOM

# Annual Corporate Meeting

The annual meeting of the church was held in the Assembly Hall at 8:00 o'clock on Wednesday, November 29th. Dr. Fosdick was elected Moderator and Mr. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, was elected Clerk of the meeting. The following were elected to the Board of Trustees to serve for three years: Winthrop Aldrich, Gordon Auchincloss, A. LeRoy Chipman, William R. Conklin. Mr. Trevor Arnett was elected to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term of a member who recently resigned.

The Board of Deacons reported that the adoption of the rotation principle necessitated the retirement, for at least a year, of the following men: Arthur E. Bestor, Harry P. Fish, Vincent M. Munier, W. D. Reeve, Charles F. Burke. In their places there were elected at this meeting: Maltby G. L. Harris, Rolland G. Monroe, T. Raymond St. John, Wilbert L. Carr, Willard S. Richardson. William F. Turnbull was elected Clerk of the church to succeed himself for a term of one year.

The regular preparatory service of the church was also held with Dr. Fosdick making an address in preparation for the celebration of the Lord's Supper and new members were received into the church on the recommendation of the Board of Deacons.

The program constituted a full and interesting hour in the Assembly Hall. It was followed by an informal reception in the gymnasium which provided a surprise that was greatly enjoyed by the company that lingered to spend an hour or so there. The Social Committee had devised a unique set-up for the north end of the gymnasium. They borrowed some properties from the stage, created some more of their own invention and design, with the result that the whole gallery and floor of the gymnasium at that end were blocked off with what is called technically "monk's cloth." Built into the center of it was an enormous fireplace with the most effective representation of an actual fire that we have seen accomplished anywhere both in size and effectiveness and puts the so-called "charm fires" into eclipse. Above the mantel there was hanging a picture frame which had been created by the efficient mechanical staff of the church. It had to be big in all dimensions to fit the scale of the huge fireplace above which it hung. Into this picture frame there appeared a number of compositions, put on by the young people of the Church School who presented what would have been called, in other days, "living pictures." The program included selections by the male chorus of the Men's Class. It was all very intimate and highly effective, lending a touch of home and the Thanksgiving season to this informal get-together of the members of the church and congregation.

The accompanying illustration will give our friends who were not present some appreciation of what the Social Committee of the church accomplished in transforming the otherwise rather forbidding gymnasium into a "living room" of warmth and intimacy.

# The Church Monthly

Published by the Committee on Publications
of the Riverside Church
122d Street and Riverside Drive, New York City

*Vol. 8* *December, 1933* *No. 2*



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THE CHURCH MONTHLY IS PRINTED BY
FRANKLIN PRINTING COMPANY · PHILADELPHIA


## GIVING A LITTLE IN A BIG WAY

Fortunately for The Riverside Church and its activities we have a few people who are able from time to time to make substantial gifts to our program. It is upon the basis of a few rather large gifts that our extra-budget relief work is being carried on. This includes the sewing room where forty women or more are earning $9 to $12 a week and also our Employment Bureau and Social Service Department. Without these gifts to the extra-budget activities we of course would not be able to function in these fields with anything like the effectiveness the situation calls for. There is a certain characteristic of these gifts, however, to which we want to call attention.

They not only are big gifts, relatively speaking, but they are gifts which are made in a big way. And it is this big way in which we are interested just now. They are gifts made by men and women who have looked over the appeals that have come to them from the city and over the country for relief work. They take into consideration the opportunity which the church offers in our extra-budget type of service. Weighing our work against the work of all the other organizations, they definitely, and with a sense of justice and responsibility concerning other things, allocate certain amounts to The Riverside Church program.

Whatever you give we urge you to give it in a big way. A gift of $1.00 a year, given in this way, is a small gift in itself but big in its understanding and spirit. We are confident that our church and its program will be much further along when our small givers have learned to give in a big way.

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OF

# The Church Monthly

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The Handbook of the Riverside Church, $1.00, plus 15c if you ask to have it mailed. (It tells of the background and program of the church, and the symbolism and architecture of the building. It is a book of 127 pages and 59 illustrations.)

*Please send your orders to The Church Monthly, 490 Riverside Drive, New York City*